

the natural resources in the Middle East can be used to help advance President Bush's stalled Greater Middle East Initiative.

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earmark regional assets for Mideast peace

(By Steven R. Rivkin)

Palestinian and Israeli claims for lost properties unsettled for more than five decades can still be remedied through sufficient compensation.

That's what an American friend of mine received after the US Army pulled a truck up to his idyllic New Mexico home early in the second world war and removed his family so the property could be used as a weapons development laboratory. His parents got a monthly cheque, enabling him to become well educated, live a comfortable life, and make worthy contributions to the US.

And that's precisely the type of assurance for individual Palestinians that Jordan's King Abdullah II has now asked of the White House, once President George W. Bush acquiesced when Ariel Sharon ruled out a "Right of Return" to the Israeli heartland.

There's a simple, just, and pragmatic way to launch compensation that the Middle East "peace process" has yet to appreciate: Recognise that there are rich regional resources lying fallow since the break-up of mandatory Palestine that could be earmarked to settle outstanding claims.

Clearly delineated stakes in the region's strategic wealth could be pledged up front as collateral for individual recoveries. This would ease qualms over whether reparations would ever be paid and promote confidence that other impediments to peace can fairly be resolved too.

A lot of economic value resides in at least three regional advantages untapped since 1948:

Trans-Israel transport of goods and commodities to and from Jordan and beyond. Transit via Israel's ports and networks of roads and rail (themselves legacies from the Mandate) could expand mineral production (potash and phosphates) in the Arab hinterland and trigger significant economic growth in the desert kingdom. An Israeli "land bridge to Jordan" would set off significant efficiencies in world commerce, by passing the Suez Canal.

What is more, the British built a petroleum pipeline in the 1930s from Mosul, Iraq, to the Mediterranean at Haifa, which has not functioned since Israel's independence. If restored now, this pipeline could provide critically needed, added security for exporting Iraqi oil to western markets.

A large natural gas field recently discovered in the Mediterranean off Gaza, Egypt, and Israel could fuel electricity production, habitation, and manufacturing in all three areas and beyond.

In each case, idle resources could be made to earn substantial and growing revenue for owners, investors, and lenders. If claimants for reparations were firmly recognised as equity owners, dividends could be paid to them out of revenue. Were ownership rights "securitised", some owners could "cash out" whenever they decided to sell their equity to third-party investors.

Israel's current control over these assets is of minimal worth until regional co-operation is assured. Yet the real value of these dormant assets can be far greater if they bring a conclusive settlement within reach. So the loss would be merely conjectural, overwhelmingly offset by long-term gains through conciliation and many more economic opportunities that would surely unfold.

For Palestinians, recovery of a productive share in what they could see as their historic

patrimony would be psychologically fitting and a spur to regional stability, offsetting longing for specific properties lost long ago. Israel, Palestine, and their Arab neighbours Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria could all look forward to regional prosperity based on indigenous resources—positioned like my New Mexico friend when he lost his home in 1942, only to find the courage, supported by the means, to live a full and productive life. Israel could consider turning key selected assets over to a third-party trustee—say a corporation chartered and guaranteed by the US or European Union under protocols specifying that individual shares held in the names of eligible claimants will start paying dividends as soon as earnings flow (rather like preferred stock). Once currently unused assets have been earmarked, Israel's neighbours might be much less reluctant to initiate co-operative development projects.

Having moved this one critical grievance up and out of the queue, negotiators could turn to other key issues—borders, Jerusalem, water rights, even limited repatriation whether or not production gets going right away.

If the assets transferred wind up being lucrative, astute international mediation and private entrepreneurship will have removed a prominent barrier to reconciliation that is not only real but innately personal. Then, the natural workings of global capital and commodity markets could, over time, top up the monetary restitution.

This is an issue better taken up immediately rather than left any longer to fester just in time to give new impetus to Mr Bush's stalled "Greater Middle East Initiative."

This writer is a lawyer in Washington, DC. From 1961-65 he worked for the White House Staff & Office of Science & Technology.

LANCASTER AREA SENIOR SERVICES PUT QUALITY FIRST

HON. JOSEPH R. PITTS

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 2004

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate an important event in my district coming up on Wednesday, September 29, an event I would have been eager to attend but for my duties here in the Capitol on that important session day.

On that day, residents and staff of sixteen not-for-profit Continuing Care Retirement Communities in my district will gather together for a ceremonial joint signing of a pledge to participate in Quality First, a nationwide, profession-wide effort to "raise the bar" on quality and on achieving a process of continuous improvement.

These sixteen communities, large and small, constitute L.A.S.S., which stands for Lancaster Area Senior Services. Together, they serve more than 10,000 seniors and 7,000 employees and have made a commitment to work together to explore ways to address trends and services that will enhance the quality of life for their residents.

Part of that commitment was the decision to take part in Quality First. All 16 members of L.A.S.S. are also members of PANPHA, their 300+ member state association of nonprofit housing and service providers, and of AAHSA, their national Association of Homes and Services for the Aging. AAHSA launched Quality First in 2002, along with other provider asso-

ciations, to make a commitment to earning public trust and to helping older adults and their families live to their fullest potential. Participation in Quality First is a way to prove to a doubting public, a critical media and a skeptical legislature that the profession is committed to quality and constant quality improvement.

The AAHSA/PANPHA version of Quality First to which the L.A.S.S. members have committed includes 10 Elements of Quality: commitment; governance accountability; leading-edge care and services; community involvement; continuous quality improvement; human resources development; consumer-friendly information; consumer participation; research findings and education; and public trust and consumer confidence.

They in turn are based on seven core principles: continuous quality assurance and quality improvement; public disclosure and accountability; patient/resident and family rights; workforce excellence; public input and community involvement; ethical practices; and financial stewardship.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the boards, trustees, and executive staff of the L.A.S.S. communities on their decision to participate in Quality First. As I indicated earlier, it is unfortunate that I cannot attend the commemoration, but I am pleased to be able to mark the event to my colleagues by way of these remarks.

The continuing care retirement communities comprising Lancaster Area Senior Services are: Brethren Village, Calvary Fellowship Homes, Ephrata Manor, Fairmont Homes, Garden Spot Village, Homestead Village, Inc., Landis Homes, Luthercare, Masonic Village, Mennonite Home Communities, Moravian Manor, Quarryville Presbyterian Retirement Community, Saint Anne's Home, Tel Hai Retirement Community, United Zion Retirement Community, and Willow Valley Retirement Communities.

RECOGNIZING THE NATIONAL CAPTIONING INSTITUTE'S QUARTER CENTURY OF ACHIEVEMENT IN CLOSED CAPTIONING AND RELATED MEDIA ACCESS TECHNOLOGIES

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 2004

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, as the co-chair of the Congressional Public Broadcasting Caucus I am introducing a bipartisan Congressional Resolution to recognize the achievements of the National Captioning Institute (NCI) in providing closed-captioning services and other media access technologies to Americans who are disabled by hearing loss and/or vision loss, or who are limited by their inability to read or master English as a second language. Given that communication delivery systems such as television and, more recently, the Internet, play an absolutely essential role in American society, the proposed Congressional Resolution salutes NCI's quarter century of progressive development in bringing media access technologies to the American people. NCI's stated mission is improving access to communications for all, and this Resolution supports the organization's laudable efforts.